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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

Uganda
AMERICAN EMBASSY

24 MAR 1975

NAIROBI, Kenya.

DATE: March 4, 1975

SUBJECT: U.S.-Ugandan Relations

THIRON COPY

PARTICIPANTS:

U.S.

Edward W. Mulcahy,
Acting Assistant Secretary, AF
Wendell B. Coote, Director, AF/E
Theodore M. Ford, AF/E (notetaker)

UGANDA

Moustapha RAMATHAN, Minister of
Cooperatives and Marketing
Juma ORIS, Minister of Information,
Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hussein MARIJAN, Minister for the
East African Community
Khalid KINENE, Permanent Repre-
sentative to the UN
Samuel NSUBUGA, Chargé d'Affaires

COPIES TO: P, AF, AID/AFR/ESA, USUN - Mr. Katzen, AF/I, INR/RAA
AmEmbassy Bonn, AmEmbassy London, AmEmbassy Nairobi, AmEmbassy
Dar es Salaam

After welcoming Minister Ramathan and his colleagues, Ambassador Mulcahy informed the Ugandans that the messages from President Amin to President Ford had been forwarded to the White House. Referring to the invitation for the Secretary to address the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit, Mr. Coote asked if the other African countries were aware of Amin's issuance of the invitation and whether similar invitations had been, or would be, extended to dignitaries from other non-member countries. The Minister responded that the decision to invite the Secretary was taken in consultation with other OAU members and that consideration was being given to inviting UN Secretary-General Waldheim and possibly some other world leaders to address the OAU Summit.

Minister Ramathan went on to explain the situation in Uganda since the military takeover in January 1971. The Government of Uganda, he explained, has faced a situation of chaos and havoc brought by enemies of the regime both internal and external.

AF/E:TFord:sm

(Drafting Office and Officer)

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Supporters of former President Milton Obote, who is now living in Tanzania, staged an unsuccessful attack against Uganda in 1972. In addition, disloyal elements in both the Cabinet and the Civil Service have attempted to sabotage and undermine the working of President Amin's government at all levels. Throughout this turmoil, people in Uganda "disappeared." To contain the situation, the entire administration of the country had to be reorganized. Ten new provinces with sub-districts were created replacing the four former kingdoms. There have been thousands of new appointments in the civil service, among local chiefs, and of local subdistrict commissioners.

The declaration of "economic war" in 1972 also led to enormous disruption. Some 60,000 non-Ugandans, mostly British nationals, were expelled from Uganda and their assets were seized by the Government. The shops and businesses were then distributed to Ugandans. Sources of foreign economic assistance and private investment dried up. Foreign manufacturers demanded pre-payment for exports of supplies, machinery, parts, and medicines to Uganda. As spare parts and tools necessary to operate the factories became unavailable, Ugandan manufacturers have had to slow down or cease their operations. Throughout this period Uganda has had to service her external debts, placing an additional economic burden on the country.

Minister Ramathan stated that no one was more concerned about the people who have "disappeared" than the Ugandans themselves. All available manpower is needed for the vital work of rebuilding the Ugandan economy. In addition, the adverse publicity has hurt Uganda's international image and has discouraged foreign economic assistance and private investment.

The situation in Uganda has now stabilized, the Minister said. There are no longer "disappearances" of people. The government was now operating as "one team" at all levels and local government was in harmony with the central government. He said that Uganda would welcome the return of the exiles living abroad.

Ramathan stated that Uganda fully intends to pay compensation to those whose assets were nationalized during the "economic war" after evaluating the claims. However, in order to do this, Uganda needs to rebuild a healthy economy and rehabilitate factories and industry. For this, foreign exchange is necessary.

The Minister then reviewed Uganda's relations with other countries. Uganda strongly supports the East African Community, he stated. Uganda and Tanzania have had political problems between them; primarily because of the support President Nyerere

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has given to the aspirations of Milton Obote to return to power in Uganda. He stated that Ugandan relations with Kenya, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire were uniformly good.

Uganda's differences with Israel, he said, were on economic grounds.

The Minister stated that Uganda is not opposed to Jews as such, but that President Amin did urge the return of occupied territories and recognition of the P.L.O. He said that Amin welcomed the U.S. initiative for peace in the Mid-East. Regarding the UK, Ramathan stated that the British had been insincere in their dealings with Uganda but that their differences were negotiable on a bilateral basis. Uganda intends to remain in the Commonwealth and to improve relations with Great Britain with whom Uganda presently has good trade relations. He said the Ugandan line towards Rhodesia and South Africa was a matter of record. On U.S.-Ugandan relations, the Minister said that President Amin's letter frankly expressed his position. President Amin desired friendly relations with the United States and would like to see us reopen our Embassy in Kampala. Ramathan reiterated that Uganda is seeking no aid from the United States and recognizes that the decision to reopen the Embassy is for the United States alone to make.

In response, Ambassador Mulcahy commented that the circumstances which forced us to close our Embassy were regrettable and we too looked forward to an improvement in relations. He pointed out, however, that diplomatic relations between the United States and Uganda had never been broken and that we had encouraged the Ugandans to keep its Embassy in Washington open. We were pleased that they did so, and we have been keeping in touch with the Ugandan Charge.

Noting that one of the purposes of this meeting, as expressed by Mr. Sisco, was to have a frank discussion of some of the remaining problems, both real and potential, in our relations, Mr. Coote commented that the American press is likely to remain critical of General Amin as long as he persists in making some of the statements and taking some of the actions which he does. Amin has responded in the past to a bad press in both the UK and the U.S. by severely lecturing the resident diplomatic representatives of these countries. Since Amin is easily upset by the press and the bad press is bound to continue, as illustrated by the Jack Anderson column in today's Washington Post, there is no guarantee that our diplomatic personnel, were we to reopen our Embassy in Kampala, would be subjected to similar verbal lashings and embarrassment as in the past. It is important that the Ugandan leadership not confuse the views of the press with those of the U.S. Government.

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Mr. Coote stated that there is evidence that President Amin continues to be highly suspicious of the United States and its motives. This was most recently revealed by the letter which Amin sent to the Chairman of the OAU, with copies to other Arab and African leaders as well as to President Ford, that U.S. ships in the Indian Ocean were there either to take over some of the Arab oil areas or to assist the South Africans. These ships, Mr. Coote added, were merely paying a friendly call at the port of Mombasa in Kenya. If Amin had taken the time to look into the matter, he could easily have discovered this. We remain concerned of Amin's strong suspicions of Americans, many of whom he believes are "Israeli spies" or "CIA agents." A U.S. Embassy in Kampala would have a very difficult time operating in an atmosphere of suspicion and repeated baseless accusations of spy activity.

Referring to the many letters which his office was continuing to receive on the subject, Mr. Coote stated that there was a strong feeling both in Congress and among the American public over the internal situation in Uganda and an apparent lack of concern for human rights. Many of these letters urged that we take stronger action against the Ugandan Government, including an economic boycott. We have resisted the latter course and still continue to purchase much of Uganda's coffee. Mr. Coote said he raised these various problems in our relationship as a friend, so that they would be understood and given careful study. It was only through such an approach that we could achieve better relations, which we all wish to see.

Ambassador Mulcahy referred to the report of the highly respected International Commission of Jurists on human rights violations in Uganda and requested the Ugandans' views on the report, adding that he felt Uganda was mistaken in refusing to admit the jurists into the country. The Ugandans responded that the report exaggerated the situation and that most of the alleged violations occurred during or as a result of defending against a foreign invasion from Tanzania. The Ugandan UN Permanent Representative stated that Uganda was undertaking its own investigation led by an Asian non-Ugandan judge of reports of human rights violations in Uganda and that following the investigation, there would be a full report. Ambassador Mulcahy inquired whether any foreign journalists were stationed in Uganda. The Minister of Information responded that there were none permanently there. Mulcahy urged the Ministers to consider how much good it would do for Uganda's image to treat journalists well and enable them to explain Uganda's policies and problems to the world.

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Mr. Coote asked for an explanation of the arms build-up in East Africa. The Ugandan delegation responded that Uganda has strengthened her forces to defend against the possibility of foreign attack. They emphasized that Uganda has no intent of aggressive action.

Ambassador Mulcahy mentioned that we understand the importance of economic independence and recognized the right of countries to nationalize foreign assets. Nevertheless he wished to call to their attention our particular interest in the settlement of the claim of the International Television Sales, Ltd., the one U.S. firm in Uganda which had been nationalized. We have raised this case with the Ugandan authorities several times during the past two and a half years, but so far without success. We would hope that the Ugandan Government could act promptly in paying a reasonable compensation. The Ugandans noted this and said they would examine the problem upon their return to Kampala.

Minister Ramathan and the Ugandan delegation expressed their appreciation for the frank exchange of views. The Minister stated that the concerns of the United States had been noted and that they will be carefully studied by his Government.

In closing the discussion Ambassador Mulcahy thanked the delegation for the time and trouble they had taken to come here. It was a token of President Amin's sincere desire to restore good relations. A full report of the exchanges would be prepared and sent up for study. In due course, he said, the Department would be in touch with the Ugandan Government through diplomatic channels.

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AF:EWMulcahy

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